

ALL THAT THE FATHER GIVES SHALL COME: A COMMENTARY ON JOHN 6:37

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JOHN 6:37-40 "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."

Calvinistic theology focuses on the first part of John 6:37 to support the TULIP doctrine of irresistible grace. According to this doctrine, God sovereignly chooses who will be saved and who will be lost, without regard to the individual's response to the Gospel, and those who are chosen for salvation are irresistibly drawn. This doctrine flies in the face of the testimony of Scripture, though. If the first half of John 6:37 is taken out of context, it does appear to teach some sort of irresistible grace, but it cannot be forced from its context.

FIRST, THERE IS THE IMMEDIATE CONTEXT TO CONSIDER. The first half of the verse cannot be divorced from the last half and from the verses surrounding it. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me" refers to the fact that the Father has ordained that every believer will have eternal life. This is explained clearly in verse 40 - "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." Words could not be plainer, and this is what the New Testament repeatedly promises. The Gospel is not limited to the elect. The Gospel is for whosoever will, and the elect are the whosoever will. Consider the teaching of John chapter six which refutes the TULIP doctrine of irresistible grace: (1) The Lord Jesus Christ died for whole world (Jn. 6:51; compare Luke 2:10,30-32; John 1:29; 3:16; Rom. 15:8-12; Eph. 2:11-22; 1 Tim. 2:6; Heb. 2:9; 1 Pet. 3:19-21; 1 John 4:14). (2) It is God's express will for all men to be saved (Jn. 6:40; compare John 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). (3) Any man who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ has eternal life (Jn. 6:40,47,51).

SECOND, THERE IS THE CONTEXT OF THE ENTIRE GOSPEL OF JOHN, which repeatedly emphasizes the universal call of God inviting sinners to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and which repeatedly promises that whosoever shall believe on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved. This is the theme of John's Gospel, and it is the purpose for the book. "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:31). The Gospel is not addressed merely to "the elect" but to every individual in the entire world. It is not an elect only Gospel, but a whosoever Gospel.

Someone will doubtless point to verse 44 to support the doctrine of irresistible grace: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." This verse does not prove that God sovereignly chooses who will and will not be saved, for the Bible also tells us that God desires all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9). It is absolutely true that no man can come to Christ except the Father draw him, but Jesus said in John 12:32, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw ALL MEN unto me." How does God draw men to Christ? He draws through the Gospel, which He has commanded to be preached to every creature (Mark 16:15). It is by the Gospel that God calls men (2 Thess. 2:14). 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 tells us that those who are lost are lost not because they are not chosen for salvation, but because THEY RECEIVED NOT THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH, THAT THEY MIGHT BE SAVED.

In John 6 the Lord Jesus Christ is addressing the Jewish crowds which were following Him because of the miracle of the multiplying loaves (John 6:24-26). Their minds were set on worldly things. They wanted a worldly savior and king, a political and social messiah. The Lord had irrefutably proven His messiahship to them by His birth, life, and miracles, but they still asked for "a sign" (verse 30) and they did not believe (verse 36, "ye also have seen me, and believe not"). Why did most of the Jewish people not believe? Why did the Jewish leaders not believe? It was not because God had not chosen them? It was because of THEIR OWN HARD HEARTS. When Christ wept over Jerusalem just prior to His crucifixion, He stated this matter plainly: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, HOW OFTEN WOULD I HAVE GATHERED THY CHILDREN TOGETHER, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and YE WOULD NOT!" (Matthew 23:37). The problem was not that the unbelieving Jews were not chosen for salvation. Christ would have saved all of them. The problem was that they rejected Him. The problem was the will. Christ would, but they would not. Man has the capability to reject God, and He has the capability to receive God. That is taught from the beginning of the Bible to the end.

We do not deny that there is a special work of God in the believer's life to draw him to Christ. It is impossible for a man to come to Christ except God drawn him and enlighten him and convict him; but this is precisely what God does by the Holy Spirit for every man who hears the Gospel (John 16:8).

God's election cannot be divorced from His foreknowledge. We are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God" (1 Peter 1:2). God has known from all eternity who will and will not receive the Gospel.

God has told us who He has chosen for salvation: He has chosen that those who receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ will be eternally saved!

"And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:40).

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